

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Revised district audit process

Applicable Statute(s) or Regulation(s):

703 KAR 5:120, 703 KAR 5:130, KRS 160.346 (Attachments A, B, C)

History/Background:

Existing Policy. KRS 158.6455 authorizes the Kentucky Board of Education to promulgate an administrative regulation establishing a local school district accountability program. This administrative regulation, 703 KAR 5:120, establishes procedures for determining assistance and other consequences for local districts having schools in need of assistance. Relevant sections are as follows:

Section 5. (1) A local district shall be held accountable for providing its schools appropriate instructional leadership and instructional support.

(3) If a school is classified as Level 3 for two (2) consecutive accountability cycles, the school district shall be subject to a district audit conducted by a district evaluation team. The team shall review each of the areas outlined in Section 6 of this administrative regulation and the district's implementation of the previous accountability cycle's school support plan. The district audit team shall also evaluate the district as to district responsibilities using the "Standards and Indicators for School Improvement", which is incorporated by reference in 703 KAR 5:120.

In the winter of 2004, the first official district audit was conducted in the Jefferson County Public Schools. This was the result of two schools, Southern Leadership Academy and Thomas Jefferson Middle School, falling into the Level 3 Assistance category for two consecutive biennia. The resulting report that was then shared with the district for the purpose of directing its improved support of these two and other low-performing schools was found to be inadequate in several respects. At the June 2005 meeting of the Kentucky Board of Education, KDE staff proposed improvements to both the audit process and the report itself and work has occurred to incorporate these improvements.

The improvements to the report and/or process resulting from the June meeting were:

1. Add an Executive Summary to the beginning of each report. The Executive Summary will clearly communicate the deficiencies at the district level that contributed to schools remaining in the lowest level of serving the needs of

children. The recommended “Next Steps” and “Conclusion”, the most important parts, will be moved to the front of the report as part of the Executive Summary.

2. Include a clear and succinct, one page graphic representation of the percentages for each performance rating for each standard. This feature, called “At a Glance”, will allow the lay reader to quickly see the overall performance of the district’s support of low-performing schools.
3. Include a one-page report of the eighty-eight (88) Standards and Indicators for School Improvement with each standard color-coded according to the ratings given by the evaluators. This will provide the reader with another tool for a quick and clear view of the district’s performance.
4. Add a table of contents with page numbers taken from report.
5. Include all eighty-eight (88) indicators in the district software.
6. Change wording on the charts section of the scholastic report and in the headings of each indicator from “Evaluation Category” to “Performance Rating”.
7. Add an audit progress-tracking grid (Attachment D) that captures the next steps that will be used to address and track the recommendations as well as to guide KDE follow-up assistance.
8. Process changes will include:
 - The audit in a district will be focused on the specific support plan created for Level 3 schools as well as the Standards and Indicators for School Improvement.
 - Thorough analysis of the scholastic audit reports of all Level 3 schools in the district will be required.
 - More time will be provided for previewing district and school documents and for preparation before starting the interviews in the district office and schools.
 - Fewer but highly trained team members who have demonstrated experience, expertise and proficiency in the auditing process will be selected.
 - Hand-held computers will be used to collect necessary data about the quality of classroom instruction.

Attachment D provides a sample report reflective of the improvements cited above.

Groups Consulted and Brief Summary of Responses:

- Current and former team members of mandated and voluntary district audits
- Recipients of previous district audits
- Kentucky Highly Skilled Educators
- Kentucky Achievement Gap Coordinators
- KDE District Support Facilitators
- KDE Office of Leadership and School Improvement Staff
- Higher Education Consultants

- Local school district officials
- Former Kentucky Department of Education officials

Those consulted were supportive of the improvements.

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Improvements such as the executive summary, the progress-tracking grid, and the “At a Glance”, one-page representation of the report findings, will provide clear and concise information for all stakeholders. Substantial gains in student achievement will result if schools and school districts address the findings and recommendations in the district audit reports. Use of the refined district “Standards and Indicators for School Improvement”, which includes all eighty-eight (88) indicators, will assist in holding the local school district accountable for providing its schools appropriate instructional leadership and instructional support necessary for reaching proficiency.

Contact Person(s):

Barbara Kennedy, Director
Division of Scholastic Assistance
(502)-564-2116
Barbara.Kennedy@education.ky.gov

Steve Schenck, Associate Commissioner
Office of Leadership and School Improvement
(502) 564-2116
Stephen.Schenck@education.ky.gov

Deputy Commissioner

Commissioner of Education

Date:

December 2005